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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 HARARE 000747

SIPDIS

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DRL FOR N. WILETT
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
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STATE PASS TO USAID FOR E. LOKEN AND L. DOBBINS
STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN

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SUBJECT: THE ZIMBABWE CRISIS: NEXT STEPS

REF: A) HARARE 741 B) HARARE 730

Classified By: Ambassador James D. McGee for reason 1.4 (d)

Summary

[¶1.](#) (C) Tendai Biti, MDC Tsvangirai (MDC-T) secretary-general, believes that the MDC-T's gameplan on negotiations and the way forward includes renewed international outreach beyond SADC. Biti said the MDC-T's success in naming a speaker of the Assembly confounded Mbeki and ZANU-PF plans. MDC Mutambara (MDC-M) members consider MDC-M president Arthur Mutambara a serious liability. Cracks in ZANU-PF are growing and the USG can help strengthen the prospects for change by encouraging Tsvangirai to reach out to expand his base while increasing pressure on ZANU-PF insiders with expanded snctions.

Biti on Negotiations and the Way Forward

[¶2.](#) (C) Biti told polecon chief on August 27 that heads of state and government at the August 16-17 SADC Summit had supported Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe and MDC Mutambara (MDC-T) president Arthur Mutambara in efforts to pressure MDC-T president Morgan Tsvangirai to sign the power-sharing agreement prepared by Thabo Mbeki, the SADC mediator, the previous week in Harare. The most important part of the agreement (Septel) outlines the role of the prime minister. Tsvangirai rejected the agreement during negotiations in Harare on August 9 and 10, and he did so again at the Summit because he believed Mugabe would retain excessive executive power.

[¶3.](#) (C) Frustrated with MDC-T and Tsvangirai, Biti said Mbeki helped draft the Communique of the Heads of State and Government which called for the Zimbabwean parliament to be convened, even though this was in contravention of the July 21 MOU between ZANU-PF and the MDC. Mbeki's expectation,

according to Biti, was that a ZANU-PF--MDC-M coalition would win the important position of House of Assembly speaker, thereby refuting MDC-T claims that it had a majority in the House, and that Tsvangirai therefore deserved to be head of government.

¶4. (C) Biti told us he believed that SADC and Mbeki were floored by Monday's vote to elect MDC-T's Lovemore Moyo House speaker. He believed that SADC now understood the MDC's strength and Mugabe's weakness. Nevertheless, Biti believed Mbeki remained ineffective and the MDC needed to pursue a strategy outside of SADC.

¶5. (C) Biti related that Tsvangirai met with the South African ambassador to Zimbabwe on August 27. Tsvangirai made the case that Mbeki was ineffective. He also complained about the continued lack of humanitarian access (Septel), the arrests of MDC-T MPs, and argued that Mugabe in making senatorial and gubernatorial appointments had violated the July 21 MOU.

¶6. (C) MDC-T, according to Biti would next launch a diplomatic offensive aimed at securing UN-AU facilitation for ZANU-PF--MDC negotiations. Based on ZANU-PF's failure (in MDC-T's view) to negotiate in good faith, the refusal of humanitarian access, and continuing arrests and violence, MDC-T would lobby for another UN resolution condemning ZANU-PF and imposing sanctions.

¶7. (C) Biti said that in the immediate future no

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ZANU-PF--MDC talks were planned. He and other MDC officials would travel to Lusaka for the Mwanawasa funeral on September 3 and hoped to engage SADC leaders. Biti did not dismiss the idea of future Mbeki-mediated negotiations, but he was clear in his opinion that they would go nowhere as long as Mugabe insisted on remaining as head of government. (Note: Subsequent to our conversation with Biti, we learned that Mbeki decided to convene ZANU-PF and MDC working-level negotiators in Pretoria today. The MDC is deciding whether to participate. Tsvangirai will fly to South Africa tomorrow; it is not clear whether he will participate in any discussions. End note.)

Mutambara on the Way Out

¶8. (C) We talked separately about Arthur Mutambara this week with MDC-M secretary-general Welshman Ncube, MP Abednico Bhehbe, and former MP Trudy Stevenson. All were outraged at Mutambara's recent antics in cozying up to Mugabe on Heroes Day and publicly blasting Tsvangirai and the West in interviews. They believed that Mutambara should be replaced as MDC-M president, but thought this was difficult while negotiations were ongoing. Stevenson in particular commented that Mutambara seemed a little mentally "off." She also thought he had done irreparable harm to MDC-M which was not strong to begin with.

¶9. (C) Comment: MDC-M is a weak cousin of Tsvangirai's formation. Its 10 MPs, however, hold the balance of power in the House of Assembly. Although 8 of them supported Lovemore Moyo, the Tsvangirai candidate, for House speaker, and presumably now believe themselves more closely aligned with Tsvangirai than with MDC-M, they cannot formally switch to MDC-T. To do so would result in expulsion from MDC-M, loss of their parliamentary seats, and by-elections to replace them. End Comment.

Ambassador's Comment

¶10. (C) Despite concerns that he would cave in during

negotiations and make concessions leaving Mugabe with significant executive power, Tsvangirai has stood his ground against Mugabe, Mutambara, and SADC. His steadfastness combined with the MDC-T's important victory in the House speaker contest, has left the MDC stronger than before negotiations began. At the same time, Mugabe and ZANU-PF have been weakened by the loss of the speakership, by Mugabe's humiliation at the convening of Parliament, and by expanding fissures within ZANU-PF. Four ZANU-PF MPs, who we believe are affiliated with the Solomon Mujuru camp, voted for the MDC-T speaker candidate. Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe governor Gideon Gono told me earlier this week that he believes ZANU-PF and Mugabe are so weak that he intended to start his own party. While we are skeptical that Gono will start an alternative party, he is among Mugabe's few confidantes, and his appraisal of Mugabe and ZANU-PF is a strong indication that all is not well within the party. Finally, we continue to receive reports of disaffection within the military and police.

¶11. (C) What can we do to support Tsvangirai and pressure ZANU-PF? While our tools are limited, I believe our focus in Harare should be to encourage Tsvangirai to reach out to a broad spectrum of Zimbabwean society. His weakness, I believe, has been to focus on his own party and especially on its leadership to the exclusion of others who are just as interested in political and economic change. He has largely

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neglected civil society, the trade union movement (from which he came), and other political actors, such as MDC-M and Simba Makoni, in mounting an opposition to Mugabe. For months, I and my Embassy colleagues have stressed to Tsvangirai and the MDC the importance of a broad-based opposition. We will place renewed emphasis on this. The Mugabe regime must know that it faces increasing opposition from throughout Zimbabwe.

I believe the AF bureau should reach out to Tsvangirai's advisor in Washington to pass the same message. He needs to hear this from as many trusted voices as possible.

¶12. (C) The other important focus should be sanctions. We have heard that the latest rollout of sanctions directed against businesses and parastatals has caused significant heartache both among those directly affected, and among those who fear being the next targets. Additional sanctions now or in the immediate future would send a clear signal to Mugabe, ZANU-PF insiders, and SADC that the status quo is unacceptable and that the results of the March 27 election must be respected. End Ambassador's Comment.

MCGEE